

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Minutes

May 15, 2007

DRAFT

2nd Floor, City Hall
241 W. South St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Members Present: Lisa Poole-Woldring, Chair; Fred Decker, Vice Chair; Jay
Bonsignore; Linda DeYoung; Nelson Nave; James Tribu

Members Excused: Bob Oudsema

City Staff: Sharon Ferraro, Historic Preservation Coordinator; Amy Thomas,
Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Poole-Woldring called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF ABSENCES

Mr. Oudsema's excused absence was approved by unanimous voice vote.

AGENDA (May 15, 2007)

Ms. Ferraro referred to four items to be discussed at the end of the meeting under other business. A determination should be made as to whether or not this type of work need to be reviewed in front of the commission or whether the work can be approved administratively.

The amended May 15, 2007 Historic District agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

DISCLAIMER

Ms. Ferraro read the disclaimer into the record.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

838 W. Cedar (Case #: IHA 07-0132)

The applicant was not present to discuss the application and the commission proceeded to the next item.

728 West Lovell (Case #: IHA 07-0136)

Beverly and William Wissman were present to discuss the application. The application requests that the first floor east side door be moved to a different location.

Ms. Wissman advised that she wants to remove a door and put in a window where the door was and vice versa. This will allow her to extend the bedroom into the porch area and make the bedroom bigger. The door and window have the same size frame so the storm door, trim and frame, etc. will be reused. The porch roof will be extended over the new door with new posts to be made to match the front porch. The porch is concrete and the Wissmans intend to install wood decking over the existing material. The existing metal handrails will be replaced with wood handrails to match the railings on the front porch.

Ms. Ferraro stated that this used to be an open porch. Mr. Nave inquired if the new porch would have a bulkhead beam from column to column for support. He expressed concern about the 2 x 4 beam used in the current construction. Mr. Wissman advised that when the storm door opens, it hits the existing roof beam. The roof is not constructed appropriately to hold it up.

Mr. Nave inquired as to how the applicants intend to construct the roof so that it will look appropriate and still have proper support. Discussion followed with regard to the most appropriate way to deal with the roof.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the stairs will exit in the same direction and Mr. Wissman responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Ferraro suggested putting a gable over the door and putting a shed roof over the rest of the porch. If the ceiling were left open inside the porch, that would leave plenty of room for the door to open. She suggested giving approval to switch the door and window and to proceed with the porch deck. The details of the porch roof could be worked out at a later date.

Mr. Bonsignore, supported by Mr. Nave, moved approval of the request to switch the door and window at 728 W. Lovell. The door and window must be trimmed out to match the other doors and windows.

After a brief discussion the motion was amended as follows:

Ms. Ferraro and Mr. Nave are to assist the applicant in working out the details of the porch roof. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

838 W. Cedar (Case #: IHA 07-0132)

The applicant was not present to discuss the application. The application requests: a. Replacement of the short column with a full height column over the pier to support the porch roof; b. Repair, reset or rebuild steps to standards; c. Add storm door on left/west door of front porch (facing south)

a. Replacement of the short column with a full height column over the pier to support the porch roof.

Ms. Ferraro stated that the applicant would like to replace the short column with a full height column. The owner feels the span needs a center support.

Mr. Nave mentioned that the newel post is part of the character of the house; there is a matching newel post in the back of the house. The handrail is meant to terminate at the newel post.

Ms. Ferraro suggested that the stairs should be rebuilt wider so the handrail would terminate at that post. The two corner posts should be enough to support the roof. The short post is a character-defining feature and there is no need to add a full column in that location. Mr. Bonsignore suggested that if a new center column is added, it should be mounted on a square brick pier to match the two existing brick piers and the new column should be the same length as the other columns.

Mr. Nave commented on items not included in the application and mentioned that the basement windows look bad; he suggested sending the basement window specifications to the applicant. Also, railings on both stairs need to be replaced, the concrete step at the bottom is tilted toward the house, the porch skirt under the newel post is falling apart and needs to be reattached, the door on the far right should be replaced, the shorter columns on the front and back porches are cracked and need to be repaired; they need to be sanded, caulked and painted. The mortar by the picture window on the left side of the front porch needs to be repaired. A deflector could be added to the roof to keep the water from ruining the mortar.

Ms. Ferraro stated that she would send a discussion letter to the applicant listing the items that were discussed and the recommendations that were made. The steps and handrails

could be approved administratively. Mr. Bonsignore mentioned that the handrail was a little short and he inquired if the applicant obtained a handrail waiver. Ms. Ferraro advised that the applicant had applied for handrail waiver but it could not be issued until the west end of the porch was rebuilt and painted; that work is almost completed now.

Ms. DeYoung, supported by Mr. Nave, moved to deny the application for 838 W. Cedar with regard to replacement of the short column with a full height column to support the porch roof. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

b. Repair, reset or rebuild steps to standards.

Ms. DeYoung inquired if the standards include widening the steps. Ms. Ferraro suggested that the motion could state that the steps are to be rebuilt to standards to the full width between the southwest and center brick piers with appropriate handrails to standards. Ms. Ferraro advised that this discussion only pertains to the front stairs.

Mr. Tribu inquired as to how the applicant would attach the new rail to the brick. Mr. Nave inquired if a single pipe rail could be installed. Ms. Ferraro advised that it would not be possible to add a pipe rail in that location because each set of steps that are more than 44 inches wide must have step guardrails on each side. The rails can be shorter to comply with historic district standards but they can't be missing. Ms. Ferraro stated that she would look more closely at the brick on the southwest pier to see if it provides a clue as to how the rail was originally attached. If the rail can be lower, it would be easier to attach it to the edge of the cement on that side. Mr. Nave suggested that a plain newel post could be set next to the brick to provide a place for the rail to be attached.

Mr. Decker, supported by Mr. Nave, moved approval to rebuild the steps to standards at 838 W. Cedar to the full width between the southwest and center brick piers, shorter handrails to standards. The details can be worked out with the Historic Preservation Coordinator. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

c. Add storm door on left/west door on front porch (facing south).

Mr. Nave suggested that replacing the single storm door with two doors might be a viable solution. Ms. Ferraro commented that the applicant could install a standard, full view storm door and have the option of also installing a storm door on the right. The applicant didn't apply for a door to be installed on the right but he could proceed with that if it were approved in advance. The door probably swings out because of the stairway. The motion could allow for both doors to have matching storm doors.

Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Decker, moved approval of a brown or black full view storm door on the left west door. It is suggested that the owner replace the door on the right with a door that looks historic. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES (April 17, 2007)

Ms. DeYoung referred to page 4, first paragraph, “attorney” and “company” should be plural “attorneys” and “companies.”

Mr. Bonsignore, supported by Mr. Decker, moved approval of the April 17, 2007 Historic District Commission Minutes as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Ferraro advised that on Thursday, June 21st from 6 to 9 p.m. there will be an orientation for historic district property owners. This meeting will be geared especially toward property owners in the new districts. Ms. Ferraro requested that at least four of the HDC members attend the orientation to participate in a mock hearing. Ms. DeYoung, Ms. Poole-Woldring, Mr. Nave and Mr. Tribu expressed interest in attending. Brian Lijewski will provide a presentation about the historic preservation tax credits. There will be a question and answer session and refreshments will be provided. There are 270 properties in the new historic districts; approximately 50 to 60 of them are rentals.

It was recently brought to Ms. Ferraro’s attention that the panhandle area behind Angell Field, including properties on Grand Ave. and Greenlawn were not included in the new historic districts. Some of the people in that neighborhood have agreed to go door to door to inquire if there is support for adding this area. Accordingly, there may be another addition to the historic district.

The West Main Hill Neighborhood will not likely add a lot to the workload for city staff or the HDC because the properties are well maintained. The rental properties in the “triangle” area may add to the workload.

Mr. Ferraro referred to a picture showing what appears to be a door from the outside but has actually had drywall applied over it from the inside. The housing code requires that any opening that looks like a door from the inside or outside must function as a door or be completely removed. Ms Ferraro proposed that the door frame be allowed to stay intact but that the opening be filled with siding to match the rest of the house. This maintains the opening, door frame and header should a future owner wish to re-open the door

Ms. Ferraro referred to the photos showing the back of 523 W. South St. The existing metal fire escape can remain as a legal fire escape as long as it is sound. However, the guardrails have no infill. It is still needed as an emergency exit according to the owner. Mr. Nave suggested tying or welding wire fencing to the existing guardrail to close the opening and make the fire escape safer. Ms. Ferraro stated that she would also check with Bob Petrick regarding a potential solution. The owner can then chose an option to present to the HDC for approval.

Ms. Ferraro referred to the front porch rail at 812 W. Lovell. A handrail should be installed by the front steps and on the back porch. A 30" handrail with a simple, square spindle and a handrail to match should be sufficient. Mr. Nave commented that the guardrail on the front could be brought down to 24" to match the existing handrail. A simple rail conforming to HDC guidelines for the back porch should be sufficient.

Ms. Ferraro inquired if the HDC would consider allowing combination storm doors on rear elevations. They are easy to obtain and they hold up well. Mr. Bonsignore suggested that they be wood screen doors rather than storm doors. Mr. Nave advised against using white or silver storm doors since they would stand out too much.

Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Decker, moved approval of the installation of storm doors with metal combination screen doors for rear elevations on buildings within the historic district. The storm/screen doors must not be white or silver. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Ferraro mentioned that the Tendura deck at 213 Elm Street is curling and peeling away, according to the new owner of the property. The new owners want to remove the Tendura and install the appropriate decking. Ms. Ferraro requested that the owners save a piece of the decking for city staff and the HDC to use as an example of what happens when this product ages. The deck was installed under the previous administration. The guarantee on the Tendura is void when the house is sold.

Mr. Nave inquired about 531 Eleanor. Ms. Ferraro stated that the case went to appeal. The city attorney and the attorney for the diocese went to Lansing to discuss the case with the judge. A decision has not yet been made.

The case at 723 Eleanor (regarding the door that was installed without approval) is proceeding at the appeal level in Lansing on Monday.

Mr. Nave referred to the house on South Street with the blue tarp. Ms. Ferraro stated that this case had been turned over to the quality of life inspector for that area.

Ms. Poole-Woldring provided her updated contact information to the HDC and city staff.

Ms. Ferraro stated that the next HDC meeting is scheduled for June 19th. Mr. Decker advised that he would not be available for that meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

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Mr. Bonsignore, supported by Mr. Decker, moved to adjourn the May 15, 2007 Historic District Commission meeting. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Prepared by: _____
(Recording Secretary)

Dated: _____

Reviewed by: _____
(Staff Liaison)

Dated: _____

Approved by: _____
(HDC Chair)

Dated: _____